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SIPDIS
EEB/TPP/MTAA/ABT FOR MARCELLA SZYMANSKI AND JACK BOBO

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [TBIO](#) [EAGR](#) [ETRD](#) [KPAO](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: BOGOTA PROPOSAL FOR BIOTECH OUTREACH FUNDS

REF: 09 STATE 122732

11. SUMMARY: Per reftel A, Embassy Bogota requests the Bureau of Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs (EEB) fund a Spanish-speaking U.S. expert on biotech policy to engage Colombian Congressional members and the private sector on the safety of biotechnology and its advantages for developing countries like Colombia. Post also suggests a second speaker with technical knowledge of tropical agriculture for an academic program. A visit in 2010 by both speakers will accomplish the following three goals: 1) engage Colombian congressional representatives on the safety of biotechnology and on developing biotech-friendly legislation; 2) expand outreach to the private sector at Colombia's largest agricultural conference in Medellin; and 3) promote scientific exchanges with academic and research sectors on biotechnology development for tropical agriculture. END SUMMARY.

12. Embassy Bogota requests biotech speakers to visit Colombia and speak on policy and technology related issues. Post wishes to engage members of the Colombian congress who are key voices when it comes to votes on issues like labeling requirements and other restrictions on biotech goods. We also seek to promote exchanges with the private sector and agricultural research organizations in Colombia, who are most supportive of biotech development.

13. Post's priority is to target policy-makers in small group discussions. A secondary priority is to work with Colombian research institutions on biotechnology development for tropical crops that are of more importance to Colombia than traditional biotech crops such as corn. A third priority is for a U.S. speaker to attend and deliver a presentation at Colombia's largest agriculture convention, AgroFuturo - an annual event sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture, where the speaker can discuss the benefits of biotechnology to a larger and broader audience. This three-pronged approach supports USG and Post economic policy objectives by helping to develop a biotechnology legal framework that has the potential to open new markets for U.S. exporters, and the potential to increase Colombia's capacity to meet its food security needs. Upon approval, Post will work on identifying specific speaker candidates in coordination with the Department and the USDA Biotechnology Office. The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) is able to cost-share by providing representational funds for events and meals.

14. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM: Colombian lawmakers' knowledge of biotechnology is limited and local policymakers are subject to the influence of consumer and environmental activists, who oppose implementation and expansion of science-based biotechnology in Colombia. Legislation to mandate labeling of genetically-modified organisms (GMO) products and byproducts was defeated in both 2008 and 2009. If approved, however, this legislation would create a

restrictive legal framework for production, trade, and distribution of biotech goods. This proposed legislation adversely affects trade (especially imports) of biotech products, impacting key U.S. GMO exports such as corn, soybeans and products made from these commodities. A U.S. biotech speaker could expose anti-biotech lawmakers to the safety of GMOs and their economic benefits.

15. Recently NGO's have been pushing harder for stronger biotechnology regulations largely because of an incident in late 2008 involving an estimated 13 percent loss in cotton production. The cotton crop in Colombia's northern coast was damaged by a pest outbreak which was supposed to have been controlled by DP 164 seed, sold by Monsanto. Producers accused Monsanto of selling bad GMO seed. The controversy is still being debated in court. In response, the GOC issued Resolution 682 demanding that GMO seed companies adopt a life-cycle-stewardship program for producers.

16. COST: The speaker program would utilize funds from EEB as well as contributions from the Foreign Agricultural Service for event space and meals. Estimated total cost of this program is USD 15,622 which includes transportation, lodging, and interpretation for speakers (if needed). However, FAS will cover \$1500 of that cost for meeting rooms and other miscellaneous expenses and interpretation costs, estimated at \$4500, will be zero if the speaker is fluent in Spanish. Breakdown is as follows:

Speaker to engage Colombian congress members and address AgroFuturo conference:

Transportation: USD 2,000 (R/T flight US-Bogota-US)

Local Travel: (R/T most likely to Medellin): USD 750

Per Diem: USD 360/day X 3 days: 1,080 USD; 411 USD for 2 travel days: USD 1,491

Honorarium: USD 250 per day (3 program days and 2 preparation days): USD 1,250

Interpretation (USD 750/day): USD 2,250 (as needed)

Interpretation. Equip: (USD 150/day): USD 450

Miscellaneous (FAS): (Meeting Room/invitations): USD 750

Total: USD 8,941; (Spanish speaker + FAS contributions, Total is USD: 5,491)

Second Speaker for Agricultural/Scientific Exchange:

Transportation: USD 2,000 (R/T US-Bogota)

Per Diem: USD 360/day X 2 days: 720; 411 USD for 2 travel days: USD 1,131

Honorarium: USD 250/day (2 program days and 2 preparation days): USD 1,000

Interpretation (USD 750/day): USD 1,500 (as needed)

Int. Equip: (USD 150/day): USD 300

Miscellaneous (FAS): (Meeting Room/invitations): USD 750

Total: USD 6,681; (Spanish speaker + FAS contributions, Total is USD: 4,131)

¶17. TIME FRAME: Post is looking for the most qualified speaker on biotech policy. Optimally, Post would like to have a speaker visit in June 2010 to reach congressional members on recess as well as attend AgroFuturo, one of the largest agricultural policy fora in Colombia. A more technically-oriented speaker program to reach out to the scientific community on the prospects of biotechnology for tropical agriculture could take place at any time during the year.

¶18. MISSION STRATEGIC PLAN THEME AND PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM: A speaker program on biotechnology will directly support Post's goals of increasing bilateral economic ties and scientific cooperation. It will also complement proposed activities under a bilateral Science and Technology Agreement, scheduled to be signed in early 2010. The program contributes to the Enhanced Economic Engagement initiative outlined in Post's MSP FY 2011 under "Promoting Economic Growth and Security".

¶19. This speaker program could help encourage the creation of a legal and scientific environment where new biotech products can thrive. The development of a favorable biotech environment can increase and open new markets for U.S. exporters, and help Colombia increase its food security, especially on the Pacific coast where malnutrition is common.

¶10. AUDIENCE: The speaker will primarily address policy-makers such as representatives from the House and Senate; Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, Energy, Social Protection, Commerce and Foreign Affairs; the Colombian Institute of Science (Colciencias), and the Colombian Institute for Agriculture (ICA). In addition, the speaker will also address a broader audience at the AgroFuturo

forum. If funded, a second speaker will meet with biotech industry associations such as Agrobio, and private research institutions like CIAT (International Center for Tropical Agriculture) and Cenica????a (a sugarcane research center).

¶11. IIP INVOLVEMENT: Funding will come from the EEB Biotech Fund through the IIP (International Information Programs) speaker program, except for meeting room and miscellaneous costs which will be covered by FAS. Post will coordinate activities in-country and assist in selecting speakers.

¶12. LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS: Fluent Spanish strongly preferred.

¶13. POST CONTACT INFORMATION: ECON Program Officer is Kristin Haworth; Email address: haworthkj@state.gov; Telephone number: 011-57-383-2451; Cell phone number: 320-488-0231. FAS Program Officer: Todd Drennan; Email address: todd.drennan@fas.usda.gov; Telephone number: 011-57-315-2033; Cell phone number: 320-498-4250.
BROWNFIELD